

Amendments to the Specification

Please replace the paragraph at page 5, line 26 -- page 6, line 26 with the following amended paragraph:

Fig. 4 shows a cycle of successive steps for fitting a piercing tool 6, and Fig. 5 shows a cycle of successive steps for removing the piercing tool 6. The piercing tool 6 is used in the stage before starting analysis, i.e., at the time when an operator sets the reagent bottle 3 on the reagent disk 4. Usually, the piercing tool 6 is accommodated in the stripper 2 and is fixedly positioned by two leaf springs 8 (see also ~~Fig. 2~~Fig. 3). Prior to starting the analysis, the operator places a plurality of reagent bottles 3 one by one on the reagent disk 4 in order through a predetermined loading inlet. The reagent bottles 3 are each provided with identification information and are registered in the analyzer by reading the identification information before the reagent bottles 3 are placed on the reagent disk 4. Upon completion of the placement of the reagent bottles 3, the reagent sampling mechanism 1 is moved from a standby position to the position of the stripper 2. Then, as shown in Fig. 4, the piercing tool 6 is attached to a nozzle 7. The piercing tool 6 has a hollow inner space into which the nozzle 7 is inserted. When the nozzle 7 is inserted into the piercing tool 6, a body 11 of the nozzle 7 contacts with a lever 10 provided on the piercing tool 6 (see also Fig. 2). A portion of the body 11 contacting with the lever 10 is formed to have a tapered surface so that the lever 10 is opened along the tapered surface. The body 11 has a slot formed therein to catch the lever 10, and the lever 10 is locked in the slot of the body 11 by a spring force. The piercing tool 6 is thereby fitted over the nozzle 7.

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Please replace the paragraph at page 8, lines 2-8 with the following amended paragraph:

Figs. 6A and 6B show another embodiment ~~corresponding to Claim 8~~. In this embodiment, a slidable guide tube 12 is additionally fitted over the piercing tool 6. The guide tube 12 is biased downward by a spring 13 and hence held in a cushioned state. On the reagent bottle side, a plastic seal having a tapered recess 14 is attached to a bottle opening.

Please replace the paragraph at page 8, line 9 – page 9, line 9 with the following amended paragraph:

Fig. 6A shows a state during downward movement of the piercing tool 6. Fig. 6B shows a state in which the piercing tool 6 is further moved downward and the guide ~~pipe~~tube 12 is engaged in the tapered recess 14. In the state of Fig. 6B, the guide tube 12 is stopped and the piercing tool 6 is pressed downward through a spring cushion, i.e., with compression of the spring 13. Thus, the piercing operation is completed by a pointed needle of the piercing tool 6. When such a reagent bottle with the seal having the tapered recess 14 is used, it is very important to accurately position both the pointed needle and the reagent bottle relative to each other. With no provision of the guide tube 12, the pointed needle pierces into the tapered surface of the recess 14 instead of the center of the tapered recess 14, i.e., a central lowermost portion thereof, if there is a deviation between the pointed needle and the reagent bottle. In the event of a hole being thus formed in the tapered surface of the recess 14, the following trouble occurs. When the sampling nozzle 7 is even slightly deviated from the center of the tapered recess 14 in the step of sampling the

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reagent, the nozzle is moved downward while sliding over the tapered surface and then strikes against the central lowermost portion of the tapered recess 14 (now not holed), whereby the nozzle is bent. In this embodiment, with the provision of the guide tube 12 as shown in Fig. 6, the pointed needle and the reagent bottle can be accurately positioned relative to each other in spite of a slight deviation between them. As a result, a hole can be always formed at the center of the tapered recess 14.